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Implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem: follow-up to the high-level review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in view of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016

Note verbale dated 14 January 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations (Vienna) addressed to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

The Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations (Vienna) has the honour to forward, pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 57/1 and 58/4, the report of the international seminar/workshop on the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and the Second International Conference on Alternative Development, which was held in Chiang Rai, Thailand, from 19 to 24 November 2015, with the request that it be made available as an official document of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to be held in Vienna from 14 to 22 March 2016.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 14 January 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations (Vienna) addressed to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Outcome of the international seminar/workshop on the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and the Second International Conference on Alternative Development*

Summary

The present document contains information on the outcome of the international seminar/workshop on the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and the Second International Conference on Alternative Development, including the deliberations and recommendations of the International Conference.

The International Conference was held in Thailand, with part of the field visit held in Myanmar, from 19 to 24 November 2015. It was hosted by the Royal Thai Government, in collaboration with the Government of Germany, the Government of Myanmar, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with the aim to promote the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 58/4, entitled "Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development", the Commission on Narcotic Drugs welcomed the proposal of the Royal Thai Government to host an international workshop and conference on the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.

2. In the same resolution, the Commission invited Member States, UNODC, international financial institutions, donors, development practitioners, regional and international organizations, civil society and other relevant stakeholders involved in alternative development, including preventive alternative development, to participate in the event.

3. The objectives of the International Conference were to underscore the need to integrate alternative development interventions into the larger national rural development agenda and to link the Guiding Principles with broader discussions around the post-2015 development agenda, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the upcoming special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016. The International Conference furthermore aimed to contribute to an increase in political and financial

* Issued without formal editing.

support for alternative development programmes by strengthening global alliances among potential international donors, countries implementing alternative development programmes, and countries interested in alternative development.

II. International workshop

4. The first segment of the International Conference consisted of a field visit and workshop from 19 to 21 November 2015, led by Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand. Participants visited alternative development projects in Shan State, Myanmar and the provinces of Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai, Thailand. On 19 November 2015, participants visited the Myanmar-Thailand Cooperation on Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Development, a cooperation project between the Myanmar and Thai Governments, in Yawng Kha, Mong Hsat District, Shan State, Myanmar. The Project, which is in its early stages, applies an area-based approach, focused on improving the overall well-being of the communities and providing them with livelihood options so that they do not have to resort to illicit activities. On 20 November 2015, participants also visited the Doi Tung Development Project in Chiang Rai, Thailand, administered by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, and the Nong Hoi Royal Project Development Centre in Chiang Mai, Thailand, administered by the Royal Project Foundation. These two latter sites are areas where alternative development projects have been longstanding and are entering into a sustainable stage, with an emphasis on diversification of on-farm and off-farm income generating activities, post-harvest management, value-adding activities, and, most importantly, capacity-building, empowerment, and entrepreneurship of the local people.

5. During the field visit to Yawng Kha village, Shan State, Myanmar, participants saw the initial stages of an area-based, holistic alternative development project spanning health, water systems, agriculture, livestock, and education activities. The participants noted that strong cooperation from the Myanmar central and local government authorities, integrating alternative development into the national and local government development policies, as well as engagement and empowerment of the local community throughout the development process, were crucial to the success of the programme. The importance of a holistic and integrated approach was also demonstrated in all the activities. For example, the livestock development programme trained the local villagers in livestock husbandry and basic veterinary treatment, set up a community medicine fund to provide medication of good quality to ensure effective treatment, and introduced quality feed for livestock, before setting up a livestock bank programme to provide the most disadvantaged households access to livestock in order to increase their assets and income.

6. The field visit to the Doi Tung Development Project involved participants' studying the production base for high-quality food and handicraft products and value-adding facilities for produce from the economic forest:[1] Arabica coffee and macadamia. These livelihood alternatives generate long-term and stable income and employment for women and men of all ages. The products can compete financially

[1] Forest areas allocated by the Government for the locals to grow high-value perennial crops that meet the demand of the market and can be processed in the value-adding chains, enabling stable income for the local communities.

with opium and are competitive within the modern marketplace, thus showcasing the importance of diverse off-farm income generation, quality assurance, continuous innovation, a market-driven approach, and people-public-private partnership.

7. Community representatives from multiple generations of alternative development beneficiaries in Doi Tung shared their personal stories about the change they experienced over the years through the alternative development project. The discussions highlighted the close engagement of the community throughout the life of the project, the sense of ownership of the people over individual and community development, promoting community self-monitoring and a culture of lawfulness, and their commitment to preserving the natural environment, their local culture, and their social norms.

8. Participants were briefed on the Royal Project, the pioneer on alternative development policies and practices in the region. The Royal Project is His Majesty the King's initiative. Since 1969 it has improved the quality of life of hill-tribe people, reduced opium cultivation, and revived forest and water resources. The Royal Project has helped to strengthen community resilience, which is crucial to sustainable development.

9. Participants visited the Nong Hoi Royal Project Development Centre, where vegetables were the main crops. The Centre presented the Royal Project's modern post-harvest handling, storage and distribution system. Comprehensive operations ensured that products of the Royal Project were delivered from the highlands to consumers in compliance with international standards on food safety and quality control. The Royal Project is a good example of using private sector level post-harvest handling in a Development-oriented Rural Enterprise. Decades of continued efforts have turned the highlands into an opium-free zone.

10. The field visits particularly highlighted the importance of ensuring survival, sufficiency, and sustainability through distinct phases in the implementation of alternative development projects. The survival phase of the project addresses the community's ability to survive by addressing fundamental health issues, improving basic infrastructure, providing food security, and generating adequate income to meet basic economic and social needs. The second phase empowers people to be sufficient by emphasizing value-adding activities to secure stable and long-term income and savings, enhancing community-based resource development and management, and equipping the community to be an agent of its own development through the provision of necessary skills and education. Finally, sustainability is reached when the community is resilient and can continue to improve itself. Ultimately, an alternative development project should be able to finance itself; sustainable development is realized when financial stability is coupled with social and environmental progress.

11. After the field visits, the participants were divided into four working groups to discuss and summarize the main findings of the field visits in relation to the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, as well as their relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, before reporting to the plenary. The summary points were then presented by M. L. Dispanadda Diskul, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, on behalf of the Thai organizers, at the High-level Conference plenary, and also included in the Chairman's oral report presented by H.E. Ambassador Arthayudh Srisamoot,

Chairperson of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, during the closing of the High-level Conference. Among others, the following points were emphasized by the participants.

12. Participants of the field visits noted the importance of a long-term holistic and integrated area-based development approach, addressing social, economic, and environmental dimensions, as well as the value of public-private partnerships in providing technical and financial support and assisting with the marketing of products from alternative development programmes.

13. Participants also highlighted the importance of land access and management contributing to a sense of belonging among the community and a willingness to invest in long-term alternative cash crops, which require more time to produce yields and become profitable. Participants especially noted the importance of human development indicators, such as income, life expectancy and education, and other measurements, such as health and food security, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, to measure the efficacy of alternative development.

III. High-level International Conference

14. The second segment of the Second International Conference on Alternative Development was the High-level Conference, held on 23 and 24 November 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand. The High-level Conference was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Arthayudh Srisamoot, Chairperson of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

A. Participants

15. The Second International Conference on Alternative Development was attended by 258 participants from 38 countries, 17 organizations, as well as international experts, academics, representatives from civil society, the private sector, and communities cultivating illicit crops.

16. The countries in attendance were: Afghanistan, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Sudan, Thailand, United States of America, Uruguay, and Viet Nam.

17. The organizations represented were: African Union, Asian Development Bank, Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat, Colombo Plan Secretariat, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Europe against Drugs, International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities, International Narcotics Control Board, International Organization of Good Templars, Mae Fah Luang Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Royal Project Foundation, Thai Stock Exchange, Thailand Institute of Justice, Transnational Institute, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Washington Office on Latin America.

B. Opening ceremony

18. The opening ceremony of the high-level session on 23 November 2015 commenced with welcoming remarks by H.E. General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand, who reaffirmed the importance of alternative development as essential in combating the world drug problem. He shared Thailand's experience in addressing the problem of the cultivation of illicit drug crops in the north near the Golden Triangle region by introducing alternative development programmes. The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Yury Fedotov, followed the Prime Minister's remarks in a video message that reaffirmed that alternative development had immense potential and could dramatically improve the lives of people. Mr. Fedotov underscored the need to reinforce the linkages between alternative development and broader agricultural issues, access to markets, land titles, and infrastructure, among others. Aldo Lale-Demoz, Deputy Executive Director of UNODC, then highlighted the aim of the International Conference on Alternative Development to link alternative development with the Sustainable Development Goals, stressing that they were a perfect platform for alternative development to deliver results in poverty reduction, sustainable agriculture, environmental protection, gender-based equality, the promotion of peaceful and inclusive communities, and good governance. H.E. Mrs. Marlene Mortler, Federal Drug Commissioner, Germany, recommended that the common goal should be to make alternative development not only politically recognized, but also a properly funded and sustainably implemented pillar of international drug policy. To end the opening remarks, Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand stressed the need for sustained long-term commitment to alternative development — from the highest political levels, to the people in the community — and to integrate this approach into broader national development strategies in order to have real impact on the ground. Her Royal Highness also highlighted that a culture of lawfulness promoted communal responsibility and a respect for public order; empowered communities are the best form of immunity against illicit activities. H.E. Ambassador Khaled Abdel Rahman Shamaa, Chair of the Board tasked by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs with the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016, also briefed the plenary on the preparations for the special session and how the International Conference could contribute to the process.

C. Plenary

19. The opening ceremony was followed by a plenary session that provided the opportunity for national statements on the theme "Implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development: Gaps and Challenges", and recommendations on "The way forward: alternative development and the Sustainable Development Goals".

20. UNODC presented the *World Drug Report 2015* chapter on alternative development, which served as input to the discussions at the plenary session as it showcased the drivers of illicit cultivation, indicators used to measure the impact of

alternative development projects, and challenges to alternative development projects focusing on the need for long-term political and financial support.

21. The presentation gave an overview of the global opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis cultivation estimates, showcasing reduction estimates using examples such as Afghanistan. A map of geographical locations of alternative development programmes in the presentation highlighted that the drivers of illicit crop cultivation were specific to physical location, characteristics of the illicit crop in question (durability, profit-generation, etc.) and environmental factors. Illicit cultivation was exacerbated by weak infrastructure and weak rule of law and governance. The main challenges of alternative development were deemed to be marginalization of communities, poverty, isolated areas with limited Government control and insecurity. Long-term political and financial support, income-generating alternatives, marketing of products of alternative development, land tenure and sustainable management and use of land, local ownership, and focus on women were highlighted as the key elements of successful implementation of alternative development.

22. The impact of alternative development was shown to lead communities from a vicious to a virtuous cycle. The vicious cycle consisted of the link between weak rule of law and rising illicit crop cultivation, with heightened organized crime and violence and a reduction in the growth of the licit economy. The virtuous cycle, on the contrary, consisted of the virtuous link between strong rule of law and governance and a reduction in illicit crop cultivation, with weakened organized crime and violence and an increase in the growth of the licit economy.

23. The presentation highlighted that funding to support the implementation of alternative development represents less than 1 per cent of global development assistance. This fact underscores the existing discrepancy between the broad, international political endorsement of alternative development and the actual funding supporting its implementation.

24. Member States stressed that there should be enhanced system-wide coherence and coordination on development and drug control policies among all relevant agencies. Effective cooperation between all stakeholders is essential throughout the entire alternative development process.

25. Member States highlighted the strong links between market access and sustainability of alternative development programmes, stressing that alternative development products must be marketable, of high quality and competitive in local, regional and, ultimately, international markets. It was noted that the private sector could play a valuable role by sharing innovation, expertise, skills and providing financial and technical support and marketing assistance for alternative development products.

26. Member States noted that alternative development programmes should not solely focus on agriculture, but also promote diverse livelihood activities and sources of income, increase food security, and progress towards value-adding and marketing activities.

D. Panel discussions

27. Two panel discussions were held on the second day of the High-level Conference. The first panel discussion focused on rule-of-law and security challenges in the development-oriented drug control context. The first panel was moderated by Mr. Aldo Lale-Demoz, Deputy Executive Director of UNODC, and panellists included Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand, H.E. Mrs. Marlene Mortler, Federal Drug Commissioner of Germany, and H.E. Mrs. Salamat Azimi, Minister of Counter-Narcotics of Afghanistan. The second panel discussion focused on alternative development, Sustainable Development Goals and the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016: enhancing innovation and impact on the ground. The second panel was moderated by Dr. Sandro Calvani, Senior Adviser on Strategic Planning of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, and panellists included H.E. Mr. Khaled Abdel-Rahman Shamaa, Chair of the Board of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016, Aldo Lale-Demoz, Deputy Executive Director of UNODC, Ms. Pien Metaal, representative of the Civil Society Task Force,[2] and Mrs. Kesara Manchusree, President of the Thai Stock Exchange.

Key conclusions of panel 1

28. Panellists and delegates stressed that the presence of the State in terms of governance and security is essential for peaceful and inclusive societies and alternative development. It was also noted that there is a correlation between areas of illicit crop cultivation and the absence of the State.

29. Panellists emphasized that respect for the rule of law is essential to facilitate social justice. While laws that comply with human rights standards exist, they also need to be regulated and enforced by the farming community, acknowledging that a culture of lawfulness comes from within communities.

30. The panel also discussed the importance of land rights and property ownership in promoting alliances with small farmer communities. The rule of law empowers communities by providing them knowledge of legal frameworks, access to justice and an understanding of their rights and duties as good citizens of society. Communities with alternative development projects can promote the rule of law when they have ownership and are responsible for their own development.

31. Panellists also highlighted the significance of linking national drug control strategies to the broader national development strategies and regional coordination.

Key conclusions of panel 2

32. The view of the private sector on the link between sustainable development and alternative development was that corporate stakeholders have a social responsibility to include sustainable development in profit-making projects. Economic investment should interlink government, environment, and society. It was also stressed that marketing skills should be promoted in communities in order to

[2] Joint Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs-New York NGO Committee on Drugs Initiative for the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016.

create value-added products and introduce products stemming from alternative development in local, national, regional and/or international markets.

33. Civil society highlighted the importance of including a larger number of farmer communities in alternative development programmes by re-evaluating the criteria required for access to these programmes. Also highlighted was the proper sequencing of alternative development projects so that livelihoods are adopted before undertaking eradication activities, ensuring that development aid is not conditional upon eradication. It is also important to ensure meaningful participation of communities in the design and implementation process, with the goal of empowering the communities.

34. From the perspective of the process relating to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016, the importance of effectively incorporating products stemming from alternative development projects into the international trading system was highlighted. It was noted that development projects should be designed based on the socioeconomic context of the community, as well as its local history and norms. Finally, all stakeholders involved should cooperate and coordinate effectively in order to ensure sustainable alternative development. Advanced research into the drivers of illicit crop cultivation, illicit financial flows, social deficits, and the impact on environmental sustainability was deemed crucial.

35. UNODC recommended that alternative development require increased credibility and viability. The Office emphasized that improved monitoring and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals' indicators, understanding the drivers of illicit crop cultivation, addressing social deficits and illicit financial flows, innovation in the areas of environmental protection, and fostering business skills and acumen among farmers will contribute to more effective alternative development.

E. Side events

36. Three side events were held on the first day of the High-level Conference, and one on the second day of the Conference. These events were a good opportunity for countries, organizations, and farmers to express their perspectives on facets of alternative development, and generated lively discussion among the participants who attended. The side events covered a range of topics such as "Improving the research and understanding of the impacts of alternative development", "Cooperation among Greater Mekong subregion countries on alternative development and inputs to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development", "Meaningful involvement of farmers and affected communities" and "Rule of law and alternative development: strengthening the rule of law to achieve sustainable development in areas of illicit crop cultivation".

IV. Key conclusions and recommendations

37. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development serve as an important framework for alternative development. There is no "one size fits all" approach to the implementation of alternative development on the ground, as it must

be adapted to particular local contexts. Alternative development increases the State's presence, builds trust between the community and government, and, in some cases, promotes peace and a culture of lawfulness. Alternative development projects seen in the field visits are recognized as examples of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of His Majesty the King of Thailand, as they focused on enhancing individual and community resilience. Alternative development, as one of the fundamental pillars of the international crop control strategy, is intrinsically linked and complementary to the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as its implementation can contribute to and create conditions conducive to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. Alternative development programmes should be mainstreamed into national development plans, involving coordination between relevant governmental agencies in order to provide sustainable alternative livelihoods, income-generating sources, services, and necessary infrastructure for small farmer communities.

39. Alternative development must have an area-based and people-centred approach based on empowerment and ownership of local communities involved in designing and implementing alternative development programmes. Effective cooperation by all stakeholders, including relevant Government agencies, local authorities, local leaders, civil society, private sector, relevant subregional, regional, and international institutions, international financial institutions and, most importantly, the farmers and communities themselves, in the entire alternative development process, is crucial for the success of alternative development, as it would meet the needs of the end beneficiaries, leverage expertise, avoid duplication of services and better utilize resources.

40. Alternative development should be included in further debates in the area of good governance and the rule of law. The relationship between alternative development, the rule of law and good governance can be seen as mutually reinforcing and complementary.

41. The success of alternative development programmes should not only be measured by illicit crop reduction estimates, but also by using human development indicators, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Increased funding for impact assessments is needed in order to acquire evidence-based data to evaluate the impact, effectiveness and sustainability of the programmes. Good quality impact assessment will provide better evidence of alternative development outcomes, which could help to engage the broader development community and render more support to alternative development efforts.

42. The integration of criteria related to environmental sustainability in alternative development programmes is important. Reforestation, water management, shifting cultivation — after viable income possibilities from alternative development programmes are in place — and sustainable land-use planning in the context of alternative development also support broader environmental conservation.

43. Access to productive land and land rights, including formal or informal land tenure systems, with the full participation and consultation of local communities, must be promoted and protected in the implementation of alternative development programmes.

44. Proper sequencing in the implementation of alternative development programmes is necessary to allow smallholder farmers to have access to secured alternative livelihoods prior to the eradication of illicit crops, taking into account the transition period between illicit crop cultivation and licit income-generating activities.

45. Consideration should be given to broadening the application of alternative development programmes both in rural and urban areas. Some Member States expressed interest in broadening the implementation of alternative development in cannabis-growing areas.

46. Drug prevention and treatment interventions should be an integral part of alternative development programmes in illicit crop cultivation areas where there is a presence of drug use and drug use disorders.

47. More research is needed to better understand factors contributing to illicit crop cultivation, taking into account local and regional specificities. Regional strategies and good practices on alternative development that reflect common and shared circumstances should be encouraged and promoted.

48. A strong political will towards alternative development principles, well-designed alternative development programmes, a long-term commitment to development assistance with flexible funding from Governments, international organizations, and donors, and enhanced subregional and regional initiatives are some of the key factors that can ensure continuity and sustainability of alternative development programmes.

49. The marketability of the products should be assessed before implementing the alternatives, and, where applicable, alternative development products should aim to create value added chains to ensure higher income to target communities in order to support sustainable livelihood and compete with income generated from illicit crop cultivation.

50. Cooperation with the private sector can play a valuable role by sharing innovation, expertise and skills, and by providing financial and technical support and marketing assistance for alternative development products.